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SUBJECT Soviet-American Diplomacy

PETER JENNINGS: Finally this evening, yet another glimpse into a once secret corner of Soviet-American diplomacy. It is ten years now since the Soviet Union's senior diplomat at the United Nations defected to the United States. It was, to those people who didn't know it was about to happen, a political bombshell. The Soviet diplomat was Arkady Shevchenko, and he has not published his memoirs, called Breaking with Moscow.

ABC's Lou Cioffi has been talking to him.

ARKADY SHEVCHENKO: I wish, on behalf of the Secretary General...

LOU CIOFFI: He held one of the top political posts in the United Nations, a Soviet diplomat with a bright future. But he became increasingly disenchanted with the Soviet government and its policies. In 1975 Arkady Shevchenko decided to defect.

SHEVCHENKO: This is a decision which is something which you do with such a pain, and you know that it's irreversible.

CIOFFI: One of the few people who knew of Shevchenko's decision was the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. at the time, Daniel Patrick Moynihan. He was suspicious at first, but eventually was convinced that Shevchenko was sincere.

SENATOR DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN: And to leave your dacha and your apartment and your next posting as Deputy Foreign Minister -- hmmm.

CIOFFI: But there was a catch. The CIA wanted the Soviet diplomat to remain at the U.N. and work surreptitiously

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for the United States.

SHEVCHENKO: They just told me, "You know, we don't want to call it spying. You just will give us some information." And I even assumed that it would not last long, perhaps it would last a few weeks.

CIOFFI: But for almost three years Shevchenko met secretly with the CIA at various places in New York: at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, at his highrise apartment, and at a safe house.

SHEVCHENKO: I gave a lot of information, I think, which the United States would not obtain for years and years with all their intelligence activities in the Soviet Union. And I did my best.

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: The big event with Shevchenko was the shock to the Soviet system when they learned someone that important, that preferred, that promising could not just defect, but actively join with the American government in opposition.

CIOFFI: Shevchenko also provided invaluable insights into how Soviet foreign policy is made, even how Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko thinks and acts.

By April of 1978, Shevchenko was convinced that the Soviet KGB was suspicious.

SHEVCHENKO: I'm proud that I helped the American government with information which was helpful for a better understanding of the objectives of the Soviet Union, both the general global objectives, objectives of the Soviet Union in different parts of the world. And it's a good thing which I consider I did for the Free World.